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ABSTRACT

This is a four-part article on how to earn a college degree from inside prison. The author, who earned his master's while in prison, argues that education offers prisoners the best chance of staying out of prison after their release, as well as qualifying them for a decent job and easing social reintegration. The author outlines the approaches prisoners can take to finance an A.A., B.A., or master's degree. He also offers guidelines for receiving equivalency credit. A 1995 Texas Department of Corrections study reported that recidivism among those with an A.A. degree is 13.7%, with a B.A. 5.6%, and with a master's 0%. States report overall recidivism rates as high as 75%. The article describes the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), which administers exams to institutionalized individuals as well as to the general public. CLEP exams are comprehensive subject and general exams. A college usually grants the same amount of credit to students earning satisfactory scores on a CLEP exam as it grants to students completing the same course at its school. The author also describes the Regents College Examinations and the DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST). In addition, the paper includes reviews of end-of-course exams, prior learning credit, and credit bank schools. (NB)

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ED 473 672

Piecing Together a College Education Behind Bars

Jon Marc Taylor, MA

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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"It's Never Too Late To Mend"

THE PRISON MIRROR

The Nation's Oldest Continuously Published Prison Newspaper, Since 1887

VOLUME 115 - NUMBER 10 MAY 2002 BAYPORT, MINNESOTA

PIECING TOGETHER A COLLEGE EDUCATION BEHIND BARS

A college education is more important now than ever before. But with drastic cutbacks in federal financial assistance during the last decade for prisoners in college, post-secondary correctional education opportunities have all but disappeared across the nation. Prisoners are now looking to independent study courses, and many have done so with surprising success. Here's what you need to know to get started.

By Jon Marc Taylor, MA

Editor's note: This article, written by a prisoner in Missouri who completed his Master of Art's degree while in prison, is the first installment of the four-part series "Piecing Together a College Education Behind Bars." The Prison Mirror intends to publish the remaining three parts of this series in sequence. Look for Part Two of this series in our June 2002 issue.

This four-part series will set forth the reasons why to pursue the personal quest for a college education, how equivalency-credit programs can accelerate the pace while decreasing the costs, where end-of-course exams and credit bank schools can coalesce your divergent academic experiences, and how to put it all together by filling in the blanks with life-experience credits and relatively inexpensive correspondence courses to fulfill your chosen curriculum.

THE VALUE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

A wise man once advised: "If you want to make the world a better place, begin by making yourself a better person." To begin that process beind bars, you must start by reconstructing your self-worth, which was devastated by the series of poor personal decisions that were compiled by systemic devaluing abuses, all of which led to this position in your life.

The single most significant program to transport you on this journey of self-discovery, individual revelation, and even personal transformation is that of education. Beyond the minimum necessary achievement of a high school or general equivalency diploma to function in today's economy, the earning of a college degree is not only your best chance to stay out of prison after your release, but also to qualify for a decent job and equip yourself with the qualities for successful societal integration.

Photo by Matthew Gore

Half a dozen years ago, most DOC systems offered on-site higher education opportunities. Then Congress, in its infinite moronic widsom, barred prisoners from receiving their chief tuition financing source of Pell higher education grants. The immediate results were the closing of half the prison college classrooms across the country and the reduction of opportunities in most of the surviving programs. Today, the only access the majority of prisoners have to post-secondary education is by the distance learning options of traditional correspondence classes, less well-known university end-of-course exams, and nearly secret equivalency tests.

The following articles of this series present the options mentioned and procedures to pursue your higher education behind bars. Moreover, the guiding principle in this educational opportunity outline is to keep the process as cheap as possible. Without the financial hand-up from Uncle Sam, this series will show you the least expensive means to a college degree. This article, however, reinforces the efficacy of Post-Secondary Correctional Education (PSCE) in your life.

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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(Sidebar #1)

POST-SECONDARY CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION RECIDIVISM STUDIES

1974: Burlington County College of New Jersey prison college program: 10% program recidivism rate compared to 80% national rate.

1976: Alexander City State Junior College prison college program: 16% program recidivism rate compared to 70-75% national rate.

1979: State Correctional Institution Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania PSCE: "inmate students with the highest risk of recidivism experienced a statistically significant (at the .05 level) reduction in recidivism when compared to the control group of 108 variables.

1980: Texas Department of Correction Treatment Directorate: "participation in the junior college program definitely results in lower recidivism rates."

1981: University of Victoria of Canada prison college program: 14% program recidivism rate compared to 52% of matched group.

1983: Folsom prison college program: 0% baccalaureate program recidivism rate compared to 24% standard first year recidivism rate.

1983: New Mexico State Penitentiary college program: 11% program recidivism rate compared to 68% overall recidivism rate.

1986: Boston University of Massachusetts prison colelge program: 0% baccalaureate recidivism rate.

1990: Lorton Prison of the District of Columbia college program: 6% program recidivism rate compared to 40% average rate.

1991: New York Department of Correctional Services PSCE programs: 26% program recidivism rate compared to 44% overal rate.

1994: "Recidivism Among Federal Prisoners Released in 1987": 5% earning college degrees recidivate compared to 40% overall.

1995: Texas Department of Corrections Windham School District Analysis: Recidivism rates of various degree levels: Associate 13.7% / Baccalaureate 5.6% / Master's 0%.

(COLLEGE ED continued from page 1)

RECIDIVISM

The most often cited value of PSCE programming is that it lowers the likelihood of returning to prison — by a lot. Basically, recidivism drops from seven-out-ten parolees being rearrested to reincarcerated to twenty percent or less for those earning an associate (two-year) degree or more. The sidebar above lists two decades of PSCE recidivism studies consistently reporting "statistically significant" reductions in recidivism. Dr. Robert Ross of the University of Ottawa, analyzing prison college programs in his article "Behaviorial Approaches to the Treatment in Corrections: A Requiem for a Panacea," sums up these studies by observing that "nowhere else in the literature of [correctional programming] can one find such impressive results with the recidivistic adult offender."

EMPLOYMENT

Parole officers identify unemployment as a prime factor in recidivism. Less than half of ex-offenders, on average, find steady employment when paroled. Every study that has looked at the issue has found that college-educated ex-offenders (75% of them) are by far those who find steady employment. Besides overcoming the stigma of being an ex-felon, the majority of jobs in today's service economy require the skills of a college educated person. Without the credential of a degree, or at least some post-secondary course completions, menial work at minimum wages is the most likely option for the ex-con.

EARNINGS

In today's workplace, only those who earn at least some college education or training are going to find employment that supports a decent standards of living. For John Q. Citizen, the average annual rate of return on the money and time invested in four years of college is about eleven percent. For the paroled prisoner, it is immeasurably greater! In 2000, the average salary for a worker with a bachelor's (four-year) degree exceeds $30,000.

AND THE MOST IMPORTANT REASON

The most important reasons why to pursue a college education is how it will make you feel. Regardless of the date you walk out the prison sally port to freedom, increasing your knowledge will make you feel better about yourself, and as your self-concept, confidence and esteem grow, how you feel about and treat others will improve too. The most important aspect imparted by higher education is that you will learn how to analyze, reason, and think for yourself in any situation. It is a powerfully liberating tool that can never be taken from you; it can only be ceded by your choice not to utilize those skills.

NOT TO MENTION THE BENEFITS FOR SOCIETY

What all of these values of PSCE impart upon the ex-con mean to society is reduced crime and thus safer communities; economic stimulation provided by better educated, productive and higher paid workers; and the conversion of the tax liability of publicly supported prisoners to that of taxpayers. Simply put, the average income of a college graduate compared to that of a high school one creates thousands of dollars more in annual tax revenue. Beyond these quantifiable proceeds, the transformative affect of higher education in the evolution of a more rational and informed citizen only strengthens a democratic society.

"A wise man will make more opportunities than he finds."

— Francis Bacon

For more information on the efficacy and efficiency of Post-Secondary Correctional Education, see the sidebar below for additional resources. The next article in this series covers the value of various types of equivalency examination programs that are recognized for college-level credit by more than two thousand universities and colleges in North America.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jon Marc Taylor received the Robert F. Kennedy and *Nation* / I.F. Stone Journalism Awards for his reporting on "Pell Grants for Prisoners," and is author of *Prisoners' Guerrilla Handbook to Correspondence Programs in the U.S. & Canada*: $23.95 ($3.00 discount for prisoners) from Audenreed Press, PMB 103 / POB 1305, Brunswick, ME 04011 / 1-888-315-0582.

THE END

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(Sidebar #2)

PSCE PROGRAM INFORMATION SOURCES

"Education as Crime Prevention: Providing Education to Prisoners"
Research Brief #2
(free)
Center on Crime, Communities & Culture
400 West 59th Street
New York, NY 10019
212-548-0600

"What Works in Reducing Recidivism, and Thereby Reducing Crime, and Cost"
&
"The Pay-Back in Reducing Recidivism, and Thereby Reducing Crime, and Cost"
(free)
CURE-NY
Box 102
Katonah, NY 10536

"PSCE: An Evaluation of Effectiveness & Efficiency"
Journal of Correctional Education,
Vol. 43, No. 3.
($5.00)
Correctional Education Association
4380 Forbes Blvd
Lanham, MD 20706
1-800-783-1232

Higher Education in Prison: A Contradiction of Terms?
($38.50)
Oryx Press
4041 North Central Avenue
Suite 700
Phoenix, AZ 85012-3397
1-800-279-6799

PIECING TOGETHER A COLLEGE EDUCATION BEHIND BARS Part Two

By Jon Marc Taylor, MA

Editor's note: This article, written by a prisoner in Missouri who completed a Master of Art's degree while incarcerated, is the second part of a four-part series on how to earn a college education behind bars.

The biggest single expense with earning a college degree behind bars is the cost of tuition. At present, the average undergraduate tuition fee is $125.00 per credit hour; a two-year Associate degree requiring an average of 60-semester credit hours, and a four-year Bachelor degree requiring a minimum of 120-semester credit hours. By this general outline, tuition fees alone will run you $7,500 for an Associate degree to more than $15,000 for a Baccalaureate! The pain, however, does not end there.

Beside several hundred dollars in incidental costs, such as enrollment, term registration, shipping and handling expenses, and graduation fees, there is the cost of texts. Books will be your second greatest expense in earning a degree in the joint. On average, expect to spend $90.00 per course for the necessary texts and study guides. With twenty (three-hour) classes for an Associate's and forty courses for a Bachelor's, figure on spending an additional $1,800 to $3,600 for textbooks.

All tolled, even with "room and board" and medical (such as it is) paid for by Uncle Sam or Cousin Commonwealth, earning a college degree solely via traditional correspondence opportunities behind bars will cost you $9,000 to $20,000. That is if you have a deep stash or a rich sugar daddy to tap, are uncreative to lazy, and cannot hustle your way out of a wet paper bag.

The purpose of this series is to show you how to piece together a college degree for less than two thousand dollars, and a bachelor's diploma for well less than five grand. Admittedly, not chump change in the penitentiary by a long shot, but possible to finance if it's spread out over several years. If there is one thing we prisoners have in abudance in the American "gulag archipelago," it is time on our hands; might as well work the system as it works us over too!

HOW EQUIVALENCY-CREDIT PROGRAMS CAN SAVE YOU BIG BUCKS

Literally, thousands of colleges and universities in North America grant credit towards their degree programs based upon various "testing services' " examinations. These tests are meant to represent the final exam in a particular college course. Passing the test with a high enough score (which can vary from school to school) and you can be granted equivalent credit as if you had taken the complete class at full cost. For one-tenth of the expense, and a month of intensive study, you can document "transferable" college credits, applicable to virtually any degree program you choose.

Few schools, however, will grant degrees singularly based upon exam credit accumulations, thus necessitating the enrollment in some courses (usually one-quarter the required degree hours) at whatever college you are seeking a diploma. This means you will have to juggle university-level credits from various sources, and take some traditional correspondence courses to earn your degree. It is well worth the effort, though.

Considering our original projection of $20,000 for a Bachelor's degree, imagine earning three-quarters of that baccaluareate at next to no cost. We are already down to five grand for that diploma, and as you will see, we can reduce that even further.

TESTING SERVICES

The value of testing service exams is that for a small fee, usually less than $50, you can earn from three to thirty semester hours of academic credit. In our example, this translates into a savings of $400 to $4,000, for the cost of less than half the standard fee of one-hour of tuition!

Each college or university sets its own transfer credit policy as to what courses and testing service exams to accept, and what grades and scores are necessary for acceptance. When you contact a school you are interested in seeking a degree from and intend on transferring testing service exam credits, you will want to ask: (a) what exam services and in what subjects do they accept; (b) what scores are needed for equivalent credit; (c) if accepted, do such credits allow you to skip one or more introductory courses; and (d) are there any additional requirements before credit is granted?

There are three major testing services (CLEP, DANTES and Regent College Examinations) administering exams. These are offered at testing centers all over the country on many dates year round, and all have procedures for institutionalized individuals to participate. You will need to coordinate with your education office, but these exams are not significantly different to proctor than standard correspondence finals. If your prison permits distance education participation, there should be no problem.

The College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) is recognized by over 2,800 colleges and universities (SEE Sidebar 1). It is probably the most respected and accepted testing service, as it is backed by the century-old College Entrance Examination Board. Over four million students have utilized the CLEP program. These are challenging and comprehensive exams. Credit is earned only if you can demonstrate concentrated subject knowledge acquired through prior or independent study, through cultural pursuits or special interests, or through professional development, such as in a military occupation specialty or company training programs.

CLEP exams cover subjects from business to science, offering five General Exams and twenty-nine Subject Exams (SEE Sidebar 2). The General Examinations over material taught in courses that most students take as requirements in the first two years of college. Each test is 90-minutes long, and except for English Composition with Essay, consisting entirely of multiple-choice questions to be answered in two separately timed sections. Six-semester hours of credit (in our formula worth approximately $900) are usually awarded for satisfactory scores on each General Exam.

Each Subject Examination covers material taught in an undergraduate course with a similar title at most colleges and universities. A college usually grants the same amount of credit to students earning satisfactory scores on the CLEP exams as it grants to students completing the same course at its school. Many Subject Examinations are designed to correspond to one-semester (3-credit) courses; however, some correspond to full-year (6-credit) or two-year (12-credit) courses. Each exam is 90-minutes long and is composed of multiple choice questions to be answered in two separately timed sections.

DSST ("DANTES" Subject Standardized Tests) is a nationally recognized testing program (originally developed exclusively for military personnel, thus the acronym DANTES, i.e., Defense

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(Sidebar #1)

TESTING SERVICES ADDRESSES

CLEP Exams
P.O. Box 6600
Princeton, NJ 08541
(Exams $46.00)

DANTES Program
P.O. Box 6604
Princeton, NJ 08541
(Exams $35.00)

Regents College Examinations
7 Columbia Circle
Albany, NY 12203
(Exams $40.00+ per credit hour)

Graduate Record Examinations (GRE)
P.O. Box 955
Princeton, NJ 08541

(Sidebar #2)

CLEP EXAMINATIONS

These exams measure your knowledge of subjects most students are required to study in the first two years of college. Depending on your school's CLEP policy, satisfactory scores on all five of these 90-minute exams can earn you up to a year of college credit.

- English Composition
- Humanities
- College Mathematics
- Natural Sciences
- Social Sciences & History

Successful completion of one or more of these 90-minute exams can prove to the school of your choice that you've mastered that subject at the college level.

Business:
- Information Systems & Computer Applications
- Principles of Management
- Principles of Accounting
- Introductory Business Law
- Principles of Marketing

Composition & Literature:
- American Literature
- Analysis & Interpretation Literature
- Freshman College Composition
- English Literature

History & Social Sciences:
- American Government
- American History I: Early Colonizations to 1877
- History of United States II: 1865 to the Present
- Human Growth & Development
- Intro to Psychology
- Principles of Macroeconomics

Science & Mathematics:
- Calculus with Elementary Functions
- College Algebra
- Trigonometry
- College Algebra
- General Biology
- General Chemistry
- Principles of Microeconomics
- Intro Sociology
- Western Civilization I: Ancient Near East to 1648
- Western Civilization II: 1648 to the Present

Foreign Languages:
- College-Level French
- College-Level German Language
- College-Level Spanish

(COLLEGE ED continued from page 6)

Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support) that gives you the opportunity to receive college credit for learning outside the traditional classroom. Over 80,000 individuals take DSSTs annually. You can choose from thirty-seven different test titles in the areas of Social Sciences, Business, Mathematics, Applied Technology, Humanities and Physical Science (SEE Sidebar 3). DSSTs are untimed (usually 90 minutes), multiple-choice tests, with no scoring penalty for guessing (SEE Sidebar 4).

Regents College Examinations (formerly known as ACT-PEP exams) have been offered for three decades, and are accepted by nearly 1,000 colleges and univesities. The forty-two multiple-choice, essay, and mixed format course exams cover the areas of Arts & Sciences, Business, Education, and Nursing at the Associate and Baccalaureate levels (SEE Sidebar 5). While this is as much as three-times or more the cost compared to CLEP and DANTES exams, the diversity of upper-level courses, and nursing specialty exams, provide testing options that the other services do not. These exams are worth considering for junior and senior-level students, or those only a few credits short of graduating.

PUTTING TOGETHER YOUR EXAMINATION STRATEGY

As you can see, these exams can save you a significant amount of money in earning a number of college credits. Moreover, the testing services have fee waiver programs for "special situation" individuals, which can include prisoner-students. The CLEP program in particular grants these waivers to prisoners; however, these services have a limited budget for such exemptions, and they are pretty much a first come, first served basis. Apply early in the year for the best chance for fee waiver approval. If denied by one service, apply to another. Remember: "no" means "not now," not forever.

Even with free testing, there is another expense you need to be concerned with, and that is of study materials. Each of the services offer free Fact Sheets and Study Guides along with sample questions (SEE Sidebar 5). CLEP ($18.00) and Regents College Examinations ($18.95) offer comprehensive study guides covering all of their 30-plus exams, with sample questions for all, test taking tips and answer rationales for multiple-choice exams, procedures for getting university credit, and study resource recommendations.

It is these recommended study resources where you can save yourself even more by creatively managing access to the preparation textbooks. Each study guide suggests half-a-dozen of the routinely used classroom texts covering the exam's material. First, check your prison library. Most libraries eventually collect various texts such as: sociology, psychology, mathematics, history, physics and literature anthologies, etc. If they don't start requesting that they acquire them, specifically suggesting the titles listed in the study guides. Second, once newer editions of these textbooks are issued (about every three years), the previous editions are deeply discounted by the publisher. For a few bucks you can pick them up from close out catalogs, without significantly sacrificing information covered on the exams. There are also several published specific preparation guides and learning packages with full-length sample tests. Request that your librarian order these as well. Third, working through your librarian or education director, form a committee, writing to area colleges and universities, seeking donations of department and professional discarded texts. (We built, cost free, a multi-thousand volume reference library for the Ball State University program at the Indiana State Reformatory with such a donation strategy.)

From test-fee waivers, free study guides to off the library shelf textbooks, you can earn anywhere from three to ninety (to even possibly all the necessary) credit hours applicable to a degree program at virtually no cost. A little bit of timely hustle by applying for fee waivers early in the term, and creative management for your prison library (even if you have to stock it yourself), you can piece together the major portion of your degree's required course hours for no money. By forming a study group in the joint, not only can you increase your prospects for passing the exams, but leverage your available resources with the collective power of your brain trust. You can begin by collecting the hundred-plus free study guides from the CLEP, DANTES, and Regents College Examinations services, which will serve as the foundation of your reference library. The rest is limited by your capacity to dream.

Finally, just how difficult are these exams? As Dr. John Bear relates, in his many books on distance learning, this is a subjective question. Many people have commented that these exams are "a lot easier than they had expected." This is true more so for more mature, life-experienced students, rather than your eighteen-year-old high school graduate. Cramming has been proven to be an effective study strategy for some. Dr. Bear tells of a man who crammed for, took, and passed three general GRE exams, earning the equivalent of ninety-credits. The man then took five CLEP General Examinations in a row, earning an additional thirty-hours. Applying them to an accredited school, he received a Bachelor's degree for less than twenty-hours of exam time. Admittedly, it is an extreme example, but effective and demonstrably possible.

Do some research, collect your materials, take the self-scoring sample tests, and see how you do. If you do well, go ahead and take the exam. If

(COLLEGE ED continued on page 8)

(Sidebar #3)

DANTES SUBJECT STANDARDIZED TESTS

Many adults returning to college find that lack of confidence is often the greatest hurdle to overcome. DANTE tests can show you how successfully you can compete in the college environment because your performance is compared with the performance of college students worldwide.

Business:
* Principles of Finance
* Principles of Financial Accounting
* Human Resource Management
* Organizational Behavior
* Principles of Supervision
* Business Law II
* Intro to Computing
* Management Information Systems
* Intro to Business
* Money & Banking
* Personal Finance
* Business Mathematics

Social Science:
* Art of the Western World
* Contemporary Western Europe: 1946-1990
* Intro to the Modern Middle East
* Human/Cultural Geography
* Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union

Applied Technology:
* Technical Writing

Mathematics:
* Fundamentals of College Algebra
* Principles of Statistics

Physical Science:
* Astronomy
* Here's to Your Health
* Environment & Humanity
* Principles of Physical Science I
* Physical Geology

Humanities:
* Ethics in America
* Intro to World Religions
* Principles of Public Speaking
* History of the Vietnam War
* The Civil War & Reconstruction
* Foundations of Education
* Life-span Development Psychology
* Drug & Alcohol Abuse
* General Anthropology
* Intro to Law Enforcement
* Criminal Justice
* Fundamentals of Counseling

(COLLEGE ED continued from page 7)

you score 'so-so' hit the texts, do some cramming, and then go for it. And if you fail miserably on the sample test, perhaps other means outlined in the rest of this series may be more favorable to earning you a college degree.

If you take an exam and do not score high enough for credit, you can retake the same subject exam again in six months. All the wiser for your experience, and in credit for your persistence. Never give up. Never surrender your future. In the words of Marabel Morgan:

Persistence is the twin sister of excellence. One is a matter of quality: the other, a matter of time.

The next article in this series will cover end-of-course-exams, life-experience learning, and credit banks.

(Sidebar #4)

DANTES FACT SHEET/STUDY GUIDE

ASTRONOMY SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. In the northern hemisphere, the vernal equinox is the position occupied by the Sun on the first day of
(A) summer
(B) fall
(C) spring
(D) winter

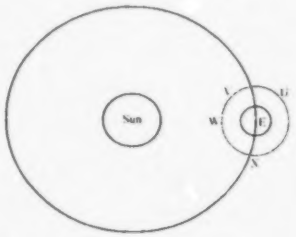
2. Which of the following is the best illustration of Newton's third law?
(A) A skater coasting across the ice
(B) The spinning of a top
(C) The swinging of a pendulum
(D) The recoil of a shotgun

3. The Energy in the interior of a white dwarf is transported outward in the same fashion as the energy is transmitted
(A) in an airplane shockwave
(B) from an electric oven
(C) from a hot-air furnace
(D) from tip to handle of a hot poker

4. The most important advantage of a large telescope aperture is that it
(A) allows a large amount of radiation to be collected
(B) gives a higher magnification of the objects observed
(C) is less affected by the trembling of the Earth's atmosphere
(D) produces a larger diffraction ring when distant stars are observed

5. Which of the following statements is true about the steady-state cosmology?
(A) It explains the isotropic nature of the remnant radiation from a giant fireball
(B) It appears to violate the law of conservation of matter in empty space
(C) It predicts a negative value for the Hubble Constant
(D) It explains the galactic red shifts as gravitational effects

6. Where is the Moon when there are spring tides on Earth?



E = Earth
U, V, W, X = Positions of the Moon

(A) U
(B) V
(C) W
(D) X

7. The bending of rays of light as they pass from one transparent medium into another is called
(A) reflection
(B) diffraction
(C) dispersion
(D) refraction

8. Which of the following planets has been observed to have extensive Van Allen belts similar to those in Earth?
(A) Mercury
(B) Mars
(C) Jupiter
(D) Venus

(Sidebar #5)

REGENTS COLLEGE EXAMINATIONS

Select the Regents College Examinations that work with your degree program whether you're enrolled at Regents College or elsewhere.

Arts & Sciences
* Abnormal Psychology
* American Dream
* Anatomy & Physiology
* English Composition
* Ethics: Theory & Practice
* Foundations of Gerontology
* The History of Nazi Germany
* Life Span Development Psychology
* Microbiology
* Pathophysiology
* Psychology of Adulthood & Aging
* Religions of the World
* Research Methods in Psychology
* Statistics
* Structure & Change: Our Place in the World
* Values & Responsibility
* World Population

Business:
* Business Policy & Strategy
* Human Resource Management
* Labor Relations
* Organizational Behavior
* Production/Operations Management

Education:
* Reading Instruction in Elementary School

Nursing: Associate Degree
* Commanalities in Nursing Care: Area A
* Commanalities in Nursing Care: Area B
* Differences in Nursing Care: Area A
* Differences in Nursing Care: Area B
* Differences in Nursing Care: Area C
* Fundamentals of Nursing
* Maternal & Child Nursing
* Maternity Nursing
* Occupational Strategies in Nursing

Nursing: Baccalaureate Degree:
* Adult Nursing
* Health Restoration: Area I
* Health Restoration: Area II
* Health Support A: Health Promotion & Health Protection
* Health Support B: Community Health Nursing
* Maternal & Child Nursing
* Professional Strategies in Nursing
* Professional/Mental Health Nursing
* Research in Nursing

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jon Marc Taylor received the Robert F. Kennedy and *Nation* / I.F. Stone Journalism Awards for his reporting on "Pell Grants for Prisoners," and is author of *Prisoners' Guerrilla Handbook to Correspondence Programs in the U.S. & Canada*: $23.95 ($3.00 discount for prisoners) from Audenreed Press, PMB 103 / POB 1305, Brunswick, ME 04011 / 1-888-315-0582.

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PIECING TOGETHER A COLLEGE EDUCATION BEHIND BARS Part Three

By Jon Marc Taylor, MA

Editor's note: This article, written by a prisoner in Missouri who completed a Master of Arts degree while incarcerated, is the third installment of a four-part series on how to earn a college education behind bars.

The use of Credit-Equivalency exams (as covered in Part Two of this series) is probably the best dollar-for-dollar value most students can invest their limited educational resources in. These exams, however, for most will not meet the entire curriculum required for most degree programs. Other, more specific, course credits will have to be earned.

The traditional means to fulfill these last few class requirments (many times even for on-campus students) would be to enroll in a standard correspondence course, submitting a dozen or so lessons and taking on an average of two proctored exams. This option will be covered in the fourth and final article in this series. In keeping with the overall strategy to piece together your college education as inexpensively as possible, and to earn a diploma in the shortest amount of time, end-of-course exam options, prior learning portfolio creditations, and credit bank services are reviewed next.

END-OF-COURSE EXAMS

End-of-course exams, also called "Course Credit-by-Examination" among other labels, is an educational structure similar to CLEP and DANTES exams, except that credits granted are usually for a more specific course in a college curriculum. This method is of particular use when one to a few defined classes are necessary to fill out a degree program's requirements.

(Sidebar #1)

OHIO UNIVERSITY
Officer of Independent Study
Tupper Hall 302
Athens, OH 45701-2979

Credit-By-Examination
$42.00 per credit hour
one-half of standard tuition fee
(168 course options)

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
Independent Studies
CB - 1020 The Friday Center
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-1020

Credit-By-Examination
$21.00 per credit hour (in-state student)
$44.00 per credit hour (out-state student)
one-third of standard tuition fee
(108 course options)

These exams are basically the same tests, sometimes the correspondence course's two standard exams edited together, that are used in the traditional correspondence program. The value in utilizing this option is in reduced expenses and time invested. In the typical situation, the expense of Credit-by-Examination courses is from one-third to one-half what traditional per credit hour enrollment costs.

In most programs, you can enroll in these courses (which at some schools are the same ones available for traditional correspondence study) and purchase the study guide, syllabus and texts, scheduling your end-of-course exam when ready. There are no assignments or midterms to complete; you study in preparation to pass the single end-of-course exam. For most students, the selection of a particular class using these means is based upon, some to a great deal, prior knowledge in the subject, as well as a particular need for the transcript credit; usually to fulfill a minor or major area of study.

Employing similar strategies, as with Credit Equivalency Exams, those associated expenses can be reduced further. Used texts can be purchased, similar topical books can be pulled from your library shelves, a couple of you can take the same Credit-by Examination course, splitting the material fees. Further, add these materials to your resource library, constantly expanding the opportunities for those following in your footsteps, motivated by your example.

Many colleges and universities offer end-of-course exam options. Even if they do not clearly state so in their catalogs, requests to such will typically result in these opportunities. Two schools that have extensive (well over one-hundred Credit-by-Examination offerings) are Ohio University and the University of North Carolina (SEE Sidebar 1).

(Sidebar #2)

EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE CREDIT-WORTHY ACTIVITIES

playing tennis
leading a church group
taking a body-building class
reading *War and Peace*
building model airplanes
learning shorthand
starting a small business
navigating a small boat
watching public television
writing a book
being a camp counselor
playing in a band
living in another culture
repairing a car
performing magic
designing and weaving a rug
writing a speech
organizing a union
devising a marketing strategy

PRIOR LEARNING

Prior Learning, also called "Experiential Learning" or "Life-Work Experience," can be a time and money saving way to accelerate your advancement toward a college degree. Prior Learning is the scholastic world's recognition that many students bring a level of work experience and life knowledge that can be assessed and accredited with varying amounts of academic credits. Today, over 1,000 schools offer Prior Learning Assessment.

The central principle that underlies assessment of work or life experience is 'what students know is more important than how they learned it.' If students can demonstrate that their existing knowledge and skills are reasonably comparable to those of college-trained students, then comparable credit is awarded. Credit is usually obtained through the process of writing a "portfolio" which summarizes and documents the student's knowledge.

Not all life-learning can be converted into collegiate credit, but you may be surprised how much you already know is indeed credit-worthy. There are eight major categories that may yield college-equivalent credits. These categories are: (1) Work (skills and activities performed on the job, including military service); (2) Homemaking (maintenance, planning, budgeting, child psychology,

(COLLEGE ED continued on page 7)

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(COLLEGE ED continued from page 6)

cooking and nutrition); (3) Volunteer Work (church activities, political campaigns, service organizations such as Jaycees and Toastmasters); (4) Non-credit Learning in Formal Settings (business training courses, clinics, conferences, lectures and workshops); (5) Travel (tours, business trips, significant vacations, living abroad); (6) Recreational Activities & Hobbies (acting/community theater productions, arts & crafts, aviation training, gardening & landscaping, musical skills, and on and on); (7) Independent Reading-Viewing-Listening (extensive or intensive self-directed study); (8) Conversations with Experts (SEE Sidebar 2 for examples of possible credited experiences).

To receive credit for these experiences you must construct a Prior Learning Portfolio. A portfolio is a written document justifying and documenting your request for college-equivalent credits. Preparing a portfolio is not an easy task, but it can be well worth the effort. Many schools provide instructions on how to compose your portfolio (SEE Sidebar 3 listing some resources that can assist you in preparing your portfolio). Portfolios have four components: (1) a request for specific course credits; (2) a résumé identifying your educational, professional, and other relevant activities; (3) a narrative demonstrating that you have "college-equivalent" knowledge and skills; and (4) documentation to support your claims of accomplishment.

It is crucial that you be able to document your experiences (SEE Sidebar 4 for some examples on how to document your life experiences). Your portfolio will be evaluated by an assessment team at the schools you apply to for credit. Criteria used to evaluate your portfolio includes, but is not limited to, the amount and level of decision-making responsibility; the number of and reporting relationships with subordinates and colleagues; the span of financial control; the duration of training experiences; the overall level of responsibility required. Schools and the American Council on Education (ACE) are striving to create "menus" on uniform credit awards for nontraditional experiences (SEE Sidebar 5 samples for some recommended credit-levels for various life experiences). ACE publishes two massive books making such recommendations: *The National Guide to Educational Credit for Training Programs* and *Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Forces*. Urge your education director or librarian to order these reference guides for your educational resource library.

Many college and universities offer portfolio credit evaluations. The number of credits possible to be earned range from a few to over one hundred, depending on students' backgrounds and effectiveness in preparing their portfolios, as well as the schools' particular policies. Evaluation fees vary from college to college. They usually range from a few hundred to several hundred dollars for registration and evaluation, and on average from $30 to $60 per credit hour granted and listed on the transcript.

CREDIT BANK SCHOOLS

Schools that have unrestricted transfer and portfolio credit granting policies are called "Credit Bank Services." These fully accredited schools work like a money bank accepting deposits of academic credits, however or wherever earned, issuing a single, widely recognized transcript. These schools also offer a wide variety of degree programs. Between the three listed colleges (SEE Sidebar 6), they offer over 200 undergraduate areas of degree granting diplomas.

There are seven basic categories of learning experiences that can be deposited in credit bank accounts. These credit sources can be mixed and matched to fulfill a majority, and in some cases, all of the necessary hours to complete a degree's requirements. These seven categories are: (1) college courses, either classroom or correspondence; (2) equivalency exams; (3) military service occupations training and experiences; (4) ACE-accredited industry training programs; (5) FAA pilot certifications and licenses; (6) nursing performance examinations; and (7) all other life experiences coalesced in a portfolio assessment.

For students with diverse training and life experiences, credit banking services provided by these profiled programs could be the best investment you can make, pulling together all the credit-worthy accomplishments you have earned. Even students with limited life experiences and/or extensive credits earned via widely accepted equivalency exams could benefit, if not necessarily from the credit banking services, then from the liberal acceptance of transferred credit hours towards these schools' degree-granting programs.

Fees vary between these services. Portfolio assessment fees range from $250 to $600, with per credit granted rates from nothing to $100. Annual service records maintenance fees average another $100, and with deft timing (i.e., applying when enough total hours have been accrued), these fees can be avoided by immediately applying for a degree. For those directly seeking a degree, rather than credit banking services, the Charter Oak State College Foundation offers grants of up to $500 per student for courses, tests and Portfolio Assessment fees. Apply quarterly and apply early for this generous waiver program.

For those able to submit credit deposits of 120-academic certifiable hours or more, tolling all fees, a baccalaureate could be earned for around $1,500. Quite a savings over the initially projected cost of $15,000 for a degree earned via traditional correspondence studies. Only your imagination limits your creative uses of all of these resources to achieve your degree. In the words of Marcus Garvey:

According to the commonest principles
of human action,
no man will do as much for you
as you will do for yourself.

(COLLEGE ED continued on page 8)

(Sidebar #3)

PORTFOLIO PREPARATION GUIDANCE MATERIALS

Earn Credit for What You Know
Lois Lamdin ($24.95 + S&H)
(as well as other helpful publications)
Council for Adult & Experiential Learning
55 East Monroe Street Suite 1930
Chicago, IL 60603

"Portfolio Video Seminar & Printed Study Guide"
Follet's Bookstore
Governors State University (IL)
1-800/GSU-8GSU, ext: 4558

Experiential Learning Guidebook
William Kemble
National College Studies
Student Assistance Division / Dept BG1
675 Blue Mountain Road
Saugerties, NY 12477

(Sidebar #4)

MEANS OF CREDIT-WORTHY DOCUMENTATION

official commendations
course outlines
bills of sale
awards & honors
copies of speeches made
copies of exams taken
samples of arts & crafts made
designs & blueprints
certificates
testimonials & endorsements
newspaper articles
official job descriptions
military records
writing samples
licenses
works of art

(Sidebar #5)

SELECTED EXAMPLES OF STANDARDIZED AWARDS

Alcohol and Drug Counselor:	6-credits
Apprentice Program-Plumbing or Pipefitting:	43-credits
Bandleader (Army MOS):	12-credits
Basic Lifeguarding (Red Cross):	1-credit
Basic Reading Tutor Training (Literacy Volunteers of America):	3-credits
Computer Electronic Technical program:	17-credits
Certified Case Manager (Social Work or Nursing):	12-18-cdts
Emergency Medical Technician:	4-credits
Fluency in Spanish:	24-credits
Ground Surveillance Radar Repair (Army MOS):	15-hours
Legal Clerk (Army MOS):	24-credits
Private Pilot License:	3-credits
Real Estate Salesperson License:	6-credits
Registered Nurse:	45-credits
Water Safety Instructor:	2-credits
9400 Copier Repair Course (Xerox Corporation):	2-credits

(Sidebar #6)

CREDIT BANK SERVICES & DEGREE GRANTING SCHOOLS

Charter Oak State College
55 Paul J. Manafort Drive
New Britian, CT 06053-2142

Thomas Edison State College
101 West State Street
Trenton, NJ 08608-1176

Regents College
7 Columbia Circle
Albany, NY 12203-5159

Regents Credit Bank
1450 West Avenue
Albany, NY 12203-3524

(COLLEGE ED continued from 7)

The final article of this series will put it all together, exampling associate and baccalaureate curriculums and some of the "best buys" in traditional correspondence study.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jon Marc Taylor received the Robert F. Kennedy and *Nation* / I.F. Stone Journalism Awards for his reporting on "Pell Grants for Prisoners," and is author of *Prisoners' Guerrilla Handbook to Correspondence Programs in the U.S. & Canada*: $23.95 ($3.00 discount for prisoners) from Audenreed Press, PMB 103 / POB 1305, Brunswick, ME 04011 / 1-888-315-0582.

THE END

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Families In Focus

Family Education Classes at MCF-Stillwater

Come and make a positive difference in your life and the life of your child(ren):

- Build personal self-worth
- Gain insights in overcoming negative messages received from your family of origin
- Share ideas about parenting and gain support
- Learn parenting approaches that are successful

12 Class Sessions: Tuesdays 6:15-8:15 p.m.
Special Graduation Event: Classes starting in July & October 2002, February 2003.

If you are interested in participating in parenting classes, send a kite to Dennis Chlebeck to get on the waiting list.

Note: If you started the class at one time and did not finish, now is the time to sign-up! Please indicate on your kite if you are making up sessions that were previously missed.

FAMILIES IN FOCUS GRADUATION

John Turnipseed knows a little about good karma, because he has experienced it himself. "I've always believed there's a force of good in this world — that if I'm doing good things, good things will happen," Turnipseed told the group of graduates at the June 17 Families In Focus graduation ceremony. Families In Focus is Stillwater's parenting program.

Good things, without a doubt, have been happening in Turnipseed's life ever since he decided to become a better father to his children. A former gang member and drug dealer who entered Minnesota's prison system four times — including time spent at Stillwater — and left a life of crime behind 14 years ago upon his last release from prison, Turnipseed knows change is possible and the effect such change has on children. Make a commitment to being a better father and it will influence every other part of your life was Turnipseed's message to the group. Today, Turnipseed is Director of the Center for Fathering, a faith-based nonprofit center, and CEO of an upstart Twin Cities company.

Warden David Crist also spoke at the ceremony. A graduate of FIF himself while an administrator at MCF-Oak Park Heights, Warden Crist told the group that the program allowed him and his wife to be able to teach their teenage son how to be a better parent.

The ceremony also marked an important passing, the retirement of Monica Brower, FIF's sponsor and coordinator at Stillwater for the past ten years. "Choices led you to be in prison," Brower told the group in parting. "Even more choices led you to be in this program. Carry forth with what you've learned." Barbara Schubring then presented certificates to each of the graduates before snacks and refreshments were devoured. — **Matthew Gore**

Families In Focus Graduates

Tabari Alexander	Kelly Leith
Ronald Anderson	Andrew Levi
Derrick Bell	Steve Nelson
Dean Bergren	Andre Parks
Jason Clifford	Drury Rayford
Jerome Dahlen	Troy Shoberg
Michael Dixon	Michael Stewart
Roger Elliott	Anthony Turner
Donyale Gayles	Roy Wahlberg
Calvin Harris	Chavis Willis
Shawn Kihega	

Counterclockwise, starting top left: John Turnipseed, Director of the Center for Fathering and guest speaker at the ceremony; Monica Brower, Families In Focus Sponsor who is retiring; and, of course, the FIF graduates.

Photos by Matthew Gore

PIECING TOGETHER A COLLEGE EDUCATION BEHIND BARS Part Four

By Jon Marc Taylor, MA

Editor's note: This article, written by a prisoner in Missouri who completed a Master of Art's degree while incarcerated, is the fourth and last installment of a series on how to earn a college education behind bars.

In the previous three articles of this series, we have examined the reasons and benefits to pursue a college education, the value and use of Credit-Equivalency exams, reviewed the use of End-of-Course tests, virtually unlimited credit accumulation potential of learning portfolios, and the option that credit bank services can offer in documenting a sustantial portion of your class credits. This final article will example associate and bachelor degree curriculums, sample some of the "best buys" in traditional correspondence study, with a special note regarding accreditation, and to pull all this information together.

In any institutional setting, pursuit of a higher education is an arduous task. The quest of a college education via distance education is especially difficult with all the attendant rules, regulations, and policies of both the schools involved and department of corrections endured, even the particular prison itself. You have many masters, but only you are the captain of your fate. To undertake such a dream, you must plan a step-by-step approach.

The first task is to collect and review your institution and system's policies regarding distance education enrollments, as well as associated regulations, such as personal property restrictions. These will provide the parameters within which you will have to construct your course of study. Contact your prison's education supervisor and see what assistance and advice he or she can provide. The education administrator can be your best ally, smoothing out the inevitable glitches, or your worst bureaucratic nightmare by obtusely or even malevolently failing to manage your education program.

(Sidebar #1)
GENERIC CURRICULUMS

ASSOCIATE OF ART'S DEGREE:	
Basic College Skills	6-hours
Arts & Humanities	12-hours
Natural Sciences	9-hours
Social Sciences	12-hours
Mathematics	6-hours
English & Communications	9-hours
Electives	9-hours
BACHELOR OF ART'S DEGREE:	
Basic College Skills	9-hours
Humanities	9-hours
Physical Sciences	6-hours
Mathematics	6-hours
English & Communications	12-hours
Social Sciences	15-hours
Foreign Languages	6-hours
Electives	9-hours
Major Field of Study	48-hours

Photo by Matthew Gatz

CURRICULUM CONSTRUCTION

The next step in your goal of a college degree is to plan your course of study. It is the responsibility of distance education students to design their curriculum to fulfill the degree requirements he or she seeks to achieve.

To be able to design your curriculum (the courses you need to take), you have to know what degree you want to achieve, and where you want to earn it. The selection of a college or university encompasses more than just the distance degree program it offers. Also dependent are the number of transfer credit hours permitted towards degree requirements (the more the better), the acceptance of Equivalency-Exam and portfolio credits (the more liberal the better), and the tuition fee per course hour (the lower the better).

There are two basic types of undergraduate degrees: Associate of Arts or Sciences, which is generally a two-year degree, requiring from 60 to 70 semester-based credit hours; and Bachelor of Arts o/r Sciences, generally a four-year degree, requiring from 120 to 130 semester-based credit hours. The Associate degree provides a basic or foundational college education, such as advanced automotive or computer certifications. The Bachelor degree is built upon the foundation of an Associate degree, and basically provides two more years of more focused education in a major or dual minor area of study.

(Sidebar #2)
TUITION "BEST BUY" SCHOOLS

LOUISANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Office of Independent Study
E106 Pleasant Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803-1508
160-Courses
ER: $63.33 per credit hour

SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY
Correspondence Division
P.O. Box 2536
Huntsville, TX 77341-2536
57-Courses
ER: $52.00 per credit hour

SOUTHWEST TEXAS STATE UNIV.
Office of Correspondence Studies
601 University Drive
San Marcos, TX 78666
60-Courses
ER: $57.00 per credit hour

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-COMMERCE
Guided Independent Study
P.O. Box 3011
Commerce, TX 75429-3011
30-Courses
ER: $60.00/$75.00 per credit

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS
Office of Credit Studies
2 East Center Street
Fayetteville, AR 72701
110-Courses
ER: $63/73.00 per credit hour

UNIVERSITY CENTRAL ARKANSAS
Division Continuing Education
201 Donaghey Avenue
Conway, AR 72035-5001
70-Courses
ER: $73.33 per credit hour

My recommendation based upon the enlightenment of the personal experience of 180-credit hours, observation of hundreds of other prisoner-college students, and intense scholastic research is to take as many diverse types of courses as possible within your limited circumstances and permitted by the latitude of your chosen degree curriculum . All schools provide curriculum counselors. Be sure to use their services and have their approvals for your chosen curriculum. For example of generic Associate and Bachelor degree curriculum outlines, SEE Sidebar 1.

'BEST BUYS' IN CORRESPONDENCE STUDY

In the vast majority of cases, no matter how

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many Equivalency-Exam and life-experience portfolio credits you have been able to achieve, for most of us, we are going to have to take from a minimum of five (for an Associate degree) to ten (for a Bachelor's degree) correspondence, three-credit hour courses from the college or university from which we are seeking a diploma.

Actually, this is a good thing. There is nothing quite as satisfying in prison as successfully completing the struggle to earn a grade in a college course. The feeling of enhanced self-respect and self-worth you achieve from your own efforts to overcome all institutional and intellectual obstacles to complete a class is like no other self-satisfying rush, other than perhaps winning your pro se written brief before the Supreme Court! But then, how many of us get a chance to do that?

As mentioned previously, there are many factors to consider when selecting a school that is right for you. To be detailed in the following section, accreditation is an essential qualifier. Tuition rates are another important factor to consider, but should not be the overriding qualifier. As listed in Sidebars 2 & 3, "Effective Rates" (ER) for tuition are listed computing all administrative and registration expenses, tuition fees, averaged to an across the board comparable sum per credit hour. While tuition rates increase every year, the listed schools offer some of the "best buys" in the nation. Do not forget the other factors to consider in the school selection process, such as the flexibility of credit transfer and acceptance policies.

There are other colleges and universities, offering tuition rates below the national average, to consider as well. Indiana University (SEE Sidebar 4), with a tuition rate of $98.75 per credit hour, offering Certificate, Associate and Bachelor degrees, with more than 200 correspondence courses, along with an international scholastic reputation and academic recognition, is a program worth considering. Perhaps you wish to graduate from a school in your state, of your favorite college team, or from which dear old mum and dad graduated. Whatever your motives, apply the suggested criteria balanced against your resources and proudly select your future alma mater. "When it all comes together," as Douglas G. Dean, whom while in prison earned his bachelor's, master's and doctorate (University of South Africa — now that's distance learning!) knowingly observes, "it is the greatest feeling in the world."

(Sidebar #3)
DEGREE GRANTING "BEST BUY" SCHOOLS

LIFE BIBLE COLLEGE
School of Distance Learning
1100 West Covina Boulevard
San Dimas, CA 91773
Associate of Art's (64-hours)
20-Courses
ER: $65.00 per credit hour

OHIO UNIVERSITY
College Program for the Incarcerated**
Tupper Hall 307
Athens, OH 45701-2979
Associate of Art's/Sciences (72-hours)
Associate in Applied Business (66-hours)
160-Courses
ER: $75.00* per credit hour

TAYLOR UNIVERSITY
World Wide Campus
1025 West Rudisill Boulevard
Fort Wayne, IN 46807
Certificates (18-hours)
Associate of Art's (64-hours)
125-Courses
ER: $69/89.00* per credit

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY
Outreach & Extended Study
P.O. Box 42191
Lubbock, TX 79409-2191
Bachelor General (125-hours)
Bachelor Business Admin. (125-hours)
70-Courses
ER: $88.00 per credit hour

*Special Prisoners' Tuition Rates
**CPI specifically designed for inmate-student's needs

(Sidebar #4)
ANOTHER GOOD PROGRAM

INDIANA UNIVERSITY
School of Continuing Studies
790 E. Kirkwood Avenue
Bloomington, IN 47405-7101

Certificate in Healthcare Accounting & Financial Management (9-hours)
Certificate in Labor Studies (30-hours)
Associate of Science in Labor Studies (60-hours)
Associate in General Studies (60-hours)
Bachelor of Science in Labor Studies (120-hours)
Bachelor in General Studies (120-hours)
225-Courses
ER: $98.75 per credit hour

NOTE ON ACCREDITATION

A basic factor of importance when selecting a school is determining if it is "accredited." Accreditation by a U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting agency assures a student that the "accredited school" has met certain standards concerning the quality of education, faculty, qualifications, appropriate text and materials, financial stability, etc. Earning course credits at one accredited school generally assures the transferability of those classes to another college, excepting that particular institution's policies and curriculum.

There is no one national accrediting agency. There are six regional associations (SEE Sidebar 5) and the Distance Education and Training Council (DETC), which generally accredits independent and proprietary schools. If those schools you are interested are accredited in any of these listed associations, you can be assured of transferable credits and a recognized degree.

Recently, unauthorized or U.S. Department of Education non-recognized accrediting agencies have been formed to "sell" essentially false credentials to "diploma mill" programs. The World Association of Universities and Colleges is such a private accrediting agency. Cavet Emptor: "Buyer Beware" should be your watch word when picking a school. If it is not accredited by one of the cited agencies, which all state supported colleges and universities must be accredited according to their charters, then you would best be advised to avoid them.

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

Now you know your basic options. Now you need to evaluate your life experiences. Collect some Equivalency-Exam preparation booklets and texts, send for various schools' distance education materials, and start building your university curriculum towards your goal of a college degree.

The biggest difference in distance education is that you do not have the classroom experience, which usually provides an opportunity for face-to-face interaction with your instructor and other students. You will have to be even more self-reliant than an on-campus student. Your entire degree program rests in your hands, dependent on your creativity, determination, and motivation.

Whether you are preparing for an Equivalency Exam, End-of-Course test, or regular correspondence lesson, you will need to establish some good study habits.

(1) Set a time and place to study. You need a schedule, and the more strictly you can keep to it, the more likely you are to be successful in your studies. Eliminate as many distractions as possible. For example, when others are out of the cell block for recreation, you study. Block out the range's roar by learning to concentrate with headphones on.

(2) Set deadlines. Divide the amount of work required for your courses by the number of months you have to complete them. This gives you a schedule and a series of deadlines to guide your pace through the course work.

(3) When you set up your study plan, allow some extra time for lessons to be reviewed by the

(COLLEGE ED continued on page 8)

(Sidebar #5)
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RECOGNIZED ACCREDITATION AGENCIES

Distance Education & Training Council
Middle States Association of Schools & Colleges
New England Association of Schools & Colleges
North Central Association of Colleges & Schools
Northwest Association of Schools & Colleges
Southern Association of Colleges & Schools
Western Association of Schools & Colleges

(COLLEGE ED continued from page 7)

instructor and for assignments and exams to be graded and returned — not to mention the occasional "interruptions" in prison assignments and exams. Ask additional questions and keep your returned assignments for study purposes. Here is a hint: many exam questions are derived from assignment questions.

With judicious use of Life-Experience credits, Equivalency-Exams, and an average of ten courses at $75.00 a credit hour, plus the costs of texts, you can piece together the 120 necessary credit hours for a bachelor's for less than $4,000. With someone who's on top of their game, this sum (which is one-fifth of what was projected in the first article of this series) could even be cut in half!

It is all up to you. If you have the will, you can succeed beyond your expectations. With some work and time, build your academic file and keep it close. The limits you face are those you place upon yourself. There is always a way to piece your college education together behind bars. Mind the thoughts of William M. Bulger:

There is never a better measure of
what a person is than
when he is absolutely free to choose.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jon Marc Taylor received the Robert F. Kennedy and *Nation* / I.F. Stone Journalism Awards for his reporting on "Pell Grants for Prisoners," and is author of *Prisoners' Guerrilla Handbook to Correspondence Programs in the U.S. & Canada*: $23.95 ($3.00 discount for prisoners) from Audenreed Press, PMB 103 / POB 1305, Brunswick, ME 04011 / 1-888-315-0582.

THE END

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THE LAO CHILDREN'S LIBRARY BOAT PROJECT

Who doesn't remember the book mobile from their childhood? Soon the children of Laos, one of the poorest countries in the world, will have their own book mobile, only this one will ferry books and other reading material along Laos' Mekong River.

The floating library, known as the Lao Children's Library Boat Project, is being made possible, in part, through funding from U.S. military and war veterans, some of whom are currently incarcerated at Stillwater Prison.

The idea of Bob Anderson, a charter member of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 320 and a veteran of the Vietnam War, the Lao Children's Library Boat Project is being funded by Chapter 320. The chapter, which has received a grant from the McKnight Foundation, hopes to raise the $6,500 needed for the project by this November. It is currently $2,000 short of its goal.

When the project was brought to the attention of VVA Chapter 429 at Stillwater Prison during its April 2002 meeting, the membership decided it was a worthy cause. In May, President Billy Hardimon-Bey made a motion to donate $1,000 of the chapter's remaining $1,700 fund to Chapter 320 for its project. The motion was then seconded by Bobby Lewis and voted on unanimously by the group.

Most Lao children live in isolated villages that do not have schools. Even for those villages that do, the highest educational level reached by most is first or second grade. Books are cost prohibitive for most of these families, the vast majority of whom live in poverty.

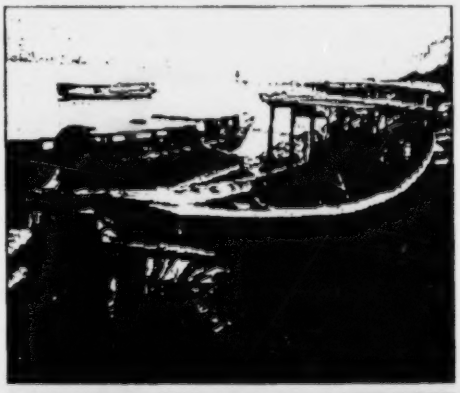

Photo by Matthew Gore

(TOP) A boat similar to the one shown in this photo will become a "mobile library" and travel about a 200-mile stretch of the Mekong River in northern Laos. (BOTTOM) Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 429 members, left to right:

(LEGAL PAGE continued from page 3)

New crime to damage property that disrupts public comfort and convenience.

The legislature created a completely new crime for damage to property of critical public service facilities, utilities, and pipelines. Minn. Stat. 609.594. A public service facility includes the following: mass transit facilities; oil refineries; hazardous waste storage facilities; and bridges. A public utility is a utility which provides telephone service, electricity, gas, water, sewage, and is owned, controlled, or regulated by a government unit, such as a city or county. Whoever damages one of these facilities "with the intent to significantly disrupt the operation of or the provision of services by the facility, utility, or pipeline," is guilty of a felony carrying a maximum penalty of ten years in prison or a fine of $20,000.

New crime for possessing or manufacturing real or simulated weapons of mass destruction.

Minn. Stat. Sec. 609.712 makes it a felony carrying a twenty-year maximum sentence to manufacture, acquire, possess, or make readily accessible a weapon of mass destruction with the intent to cause injury to another. It is also a felony, subject to a twenty-year maximum sentence, to manufacture, acquire, possess, or make readily accessible a prohibited substance, which includes some of the following substances: botulims, plague, smallpox, anthrax, mustard gas, cyanide, radioactive materials, and Sarin gas.

This statute also prohibits manufacturing, acquiring, or possessing a simulated weapon of mass destruction with the intent of terrorizing another; however, the maximum penalty for a simulated weapon of mass destruction is ten years. Finally, this statute prohibits displaying or threatening to use a weapon of mass destruction with the purpose of terrorizing another, causing evacuation of a place, or disrupting activities, and makes it a ten-year felony to do any of these acts. There is also a provision for civil damages to allow the municipality or state to recover expenses incurred for the offense.

Presumably this offense was intended to provide a means of prosecuting people who mail harmful substances, such as smallpox spores, or simulated harmful substances, with the intent of terrorizing the recipient. Another example would be the release or threatened release of Sarin gas or mustard gas in a public place, as occurred in Japan several years ago in the subway system.

We will have to wait and see what happens.

Although these new crimes designed to combat terrorism probably could have been prosecuted under existing criminal statutes, or would be prosecuted by the federal government instead of local authories, the legislature has made it clear that Minnesota is serious about prosecuting crimes

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